

SALT LAKE CITY DESERET NEWS
5 February 1982

Former CIA chief defends agency's role

By Barbara Bernstein

Deseret News correspondent

OGDEN — Ever since Moses sent spies to the land of Canaan, intelligence-gathering has been an intriguing function, but the profession has changed since America got serious about it, according to William Colby, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Colby spoke at a noon convocation Thursday at Weber State College, sponsored by the Associated Students in conjunction with Social Science Week. It was Colby's second visit to the Ogden school.

Colby said the change in American espionage began 40 years ago when the country was surprised by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It shouldn't have been surprised, he said, because there intelligence abounded pointing to the intentions and capabilities of the Japanese, but the information was not consolidated.

"We decided to find out what we already knew and centralize it," he said. The government solicited information from universities, geographical societies, tourists and commercial travelers, and asked experts in the Central Intelligence Agency to analyze the data.

Even such a trivial thing as a photo of somebody's Aunt Minnie on a beach in a bathing suit was put to use, he said. If experts noted that she was standing by a truck, for example, they would know the beach was firm enough for military or espionage vehicles.

The progress of technology has brought a change in American espionage too, Colby said. The observation planes that flew over Russia for 3½ years were not an exercise in idle curiosity. Eventually they flew over Cuba and detected the shape of Soviet armaments being constructed there.

Technology bought the United States the time to confront Khrushchev before he had his weapons finished and pointed at the U.S.

With technological help, the United States has gone into space and under the ocean to keep watch on other countries' activities, Colby said, and literally listens to the rumbling of the earth's crust to detect their atomic tests.

With the changed scope and accuracy of knowledge-gathering, he said, the United States no longer has to send an individual spy slinking out of Hong Kong to see what the Chinese are doing on their borders. "We can see and hear them from here."

Another change in intelligence operation is recent insistence that American spies operate under the Constitution and laws, Colby said. Formerly, spies were considered outside the law, and even President Dwight D. Eisenhower said spies have to be permitted to do their own work in their own way.

After Watergate, the public engaged in recrimination and hysteria about the CIA, Colby said, exaggerating instances where the agency did the wrong thing and ignoring the good it has done.

"We are sobering up now after our binge," he said. "We have resolved the contradiction, and we are going to run our intelligence agency under the Constitution." He said the CIA now has a public document issued by the president that delineates what the CIA is empowered to do and sets up a system of accountability. Congress even has two committees to see that the intelligence service keeps within its bounds.

"We still have to turn to the spy, to brave Americans and brave foreigners, to bring us information," Colby said, because the world is still not safe for democracy. Other countries, comparatively underprivileged, see American prosperity and seek tools to bridge the difference between them and the United States. The tools they use might be economic and political, or they might be sabotage and violence, he said.

Great power is now available in small packages — chemical, nuclear and biological — he said, and this power can easily come into the hands of despots.

But U.S. information systems can discover problems and defend against threats. It can even deter the use of threats against the United States and its allies by buying time. The United States can now lay information on the negotiating table and deal from strong and informed positions, Colby said.